

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

*A Woman of No Importance* is one of popular melodramas in the nineteenth century. This play was written by Oscar Wilde a famous figure of the late-nineteenth century literature. It consists of four acts, played by nine actors with the main theme is the secrets upper-classes society. It is about secret, decision, truth, and prides that become the important thing to everyone. *A Woman of No Importance* premiered on 19 April 1893 at London's Haymarket Theatre being success on the first performance.

Oscar Wilde, the writer of this play was born on October 16, 1854 in Dublin, Ireland and died in Paris 30 November 1900. He was the second son of Sir William and Lady Jane Wilde. Sir William was a famous surgeon, but he embroiled a sensation scandal, raped his former patient in 1864. Then, Jane Wilde was a poet and loved made a sensation like her son. Oscar Wilde spent his early youth in his native country. For three years he attended in Trinity College in Dublin. In 1878 he moved to London and completed his university education at Oxford in classical studies.

He wrote several books after traveling from Italy and Grace. His first book was a volume of poems (1881), and followed his first play too *Vera, or*

*the Nihilists* was performed in the United States in 1891. But, his first play was not well received, nor his volume of poem. And in 1884, he married and has two children. He also became an editor of *Woman's World*, one of reputable publication.

His some collaboration works such as *The Canterville Ghost* (1887), *The Happy Princes and Other Tales* (1888), *The Point of Mr. W. H.* (1889), *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), *Lord Arthur Seville's Crime* (1891), and *Intention* (essay, 1891). Then, his important plays include *The Duchess of Padua* (1883), *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Florentine Tragedy* (*La Sainte Courtisane* 1893), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *Salomé* (1894), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and the last of Wilde's plays to be written, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Wilde's plays also have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright are.

*A Woman of No Importance* talked about a woman who became a single parent in Victorian Era. In this era, at England a person that became a single parent, birth illegitimate son was not received well in society. But, whether she had an opportunity to be married women, she rejected and still pride being single parent.

One day Lady Hunstanton invited her friends to her country house. At the Hunstanton terrace the story began. Among them who are invited, there was Hester, a young girl from America. She was Puritanism and not really

like English custom that looked everything come from their social status. She had attention on Mr. Arbuthnot, a young man who promoted to be Lord Illingworth's secretary, a promising diplomatic career. But, Lady Caroline told Hester that it was not customary for a young woman to speak with such enthusiasm of any person of the opposite sex. English women concealed their feelings till after they were married. Mrs. Allonby, Lord Illingworth's closed friends that not really like Hester talked about a challenge, asked Lord Illingworth to kiss Hester.

On other side, Lady Hunstanton that heard Gerald being promoted to be Lord Illingworth secretary was very happy and wanted to invite Gerald's mother to have dinner with other's her invited guess. At that night, a secret appeared. When Mrs. Arbuthnot met with Lord Illingworth her former lover, there known that Gerald was his illegitimate son. Mrs. Arbuthnot asked Lord Illingworth to do not bother her son. In other scene knew that Lord Illingworth seduced Hester, Gerald was very angry with him. Then he had been angrier when he knew that Lord Illingworth was his own father.

One day after, at Mrs. Arbuthnot's house Gerald expressed his regret to not become Lord Illingworth secretary, and wanted to send him a letter. In his letter Gerald asked Lord Illingworth to marry his mother, which represented an obligation of him which delay. Even Gerald forced his mother to accept but Mrs. Arbuthnot still refused it.

When Gerald and Hester went out to walk along at garden, Lord Illingworth came to Mrs. Arbuthnot's house. He said that he got letter from Gerald, then he told his desire to marry Mrs. Arbuthnot. He proposed for Mrs. Arbuthnot to marry him, and begged that he wanted to close to his son. But, Mrs. Arbuthnot refused that proposal and asked to not bother her son. And, the left of Lord Illingworth from that house become the end of this drama.

After the play was performed, *A Woman of No Importance* got reaction from many people. Damian O'Leary and Pauline gave their good responses. Damian O'Leary (2000) said that *A Woman of No Importance* is one of the most beautiful works Wilde ever wrote. According to him Mrs. Arbuthnot's speech at the end of Act Four, beginning "men don't know what mothers are" is one of the most beautiful pieces he ever read in Wilde's. He also said that Mrs. Arbunthnot's speech is very ironic speech, considering it was written by a man, but it shows what a wonderful insight into women Wilde had. He assumed that essentially the play is about morality and the conflict between a person's own, private sense of morality and the moral values imposed on us by society. Then he finally stated that "this is a truly beautiful work which I highly recommend." On the other side Pauline (2011) stated that *A Woman of No Importance* portrays very feminist play; the intrigue is subtle and occurs in the background. She said that Hester Worsley the American Puritan and Mrs. Allonby the revolutionary feminist set the tone of this controversy. Pauline thought that Oscar Wilde paints an aristocratic society dominated by hypocrisy. In conclusion, Pauline concluded

that *A Woman of No Importance* is a very scolding comedy of manners, a good dose of feminism and a drop of tragedy. Both of Damian and Pauline give attention on the theme of *A Woman of No importance* that made this drama interesting.

Besides the good response, *A Woman of No Importance* also got some negative responses from the audience they were K. Busch and Adrian Bean. K. Busch (2009) said that “The play is bare bones. No introductions. No cast of characters. I even noticed a few typos. At least once, a speech is attributed to the wrong character.” Then to Adrian Bean (2010) Wilde’s dialogues were brittle. He said that the aristocrats talked to one another in nonstop epigrams; any true feelings were kept securely locked away in the belief that to put them on show would reveal an individual’s basic weakness of character. Adrian also concluded that the effect of such scenes was strongly reminiscent of an absurd drama, in which the characters talked in incessant non sequiturs as a way of covering up the emptiness of their lives. While K. Busch criticizes the character, Adrian thinks that Wilde’s writing was too full of bored conversation make plot of the story not interesting.

According to the writer *A Woman of No Importance* is an interesting drama. There are four aspects that make the writer be interested in this play. The first is *A Woman of No Importance* has uncommon story. The story seems to expose the hypocrisies at the heart of their shallow society, it is

rarely in that years. The play is sheer comedy, that mock upper class point of view which has limited knowledge in the whole play.

Second, this play has unique characters. Especially about Lady Caroline, she made her husband like a puppet. She took under control in household, and it is uncommon on Victorian era. Then, of course Mrs. Arbuthnot the main character of this play, she had strong character and pride of her condition, a single parent.

The third aspect of interest in *A Woman of No Importance* is the value of this play. In Victorian era, having illegitimate son was a sin. Everyone was counted by their social status, not by what they ever did. So, Victorian attitude in this play is so interesting to be discussed, especially from feminist perspective.

The last aspect is the pride to be single parent, the main topic in this play. Single parent in England at that time was had a bad stereotype. Being single parent in a Victorian era takes much risk. They do not have a good reputation, and has no social status that very important at that time. But, different with Rachel Arbuthnot, she took a choice to be single parent and she was pride to be a single parent.

Based on those several reason why *A Woman of No Importance* is interested to be studied and the writer will observe using feminist perspective. So the writer constructs the title **THE PRIDE TO BE A SINGLE**

**PARENT IN OSCAR WILDE'S *A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE*  
(1893): FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE.**

**B. Literature Review**

*A Woman of No Importance* is one of Oscar Wilde's plays among four his social comedies's plays. There are *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. As long as the researcher understand, there is a research that have analyzed *A Woman of No Importance* namely Dr. Marcia Vale (2006), her research is entitled *Oscar Wilde's Concept of Comedy as Reflected in His Story Comedies : Lady Windermere Fan, A Woman of No Importance, and The Importance of Being Ernest*. In her research she attempted to explore Oscar Wilde's concept of comedies in his society comedy. It is possible to see a new light to the art of drama by mixing comedy of manners and Victorian melodrama, especially in terms characters, theme, situation, paradoxes, and dialogues. In her thesis, basic influences and his new voice, which emerges trough his extraordinary witticism, are analyzed in three of Oscar Wilde's social comedy: *Lady Windermere Fan, A Woman of No Importance, and The Importance of Being Ernest*.

Meanwhile, in this research, the researcher focuses study on the aspect of the pride to be single parent which occur in Mrs. Arbuthnot, the main character of the play. The researcher analyzed Mrs. Arbuthnot pride by applying the basic

concept of feminism. So, the researcher will take feminist perspective to reveal *Oscar Wilde's A Woman of No Importance*.

### **C. Problem Statement**

The major problem statement of the study is how the pride to be a single parent is reflected on Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance*.

### **D. Limitation of the Study**

In this research the researcher limits the focus of the study and analyses the major character of *A Woman of No Importance* play script on her pride to be a single parent based on Feminist Perspective.

### **E. Objective of the Study**

Dealing with the problem statement above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the play based on its structural elements.
2. To analyze the play based on Feminist Perspective.

### **F. Benefit of the Study**

The result of the study is highly expected to give benefit as follow:

#### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

This study is expected to give a high contribution to the body of knowledge, particularly to those who are interested in Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance*



## **2. Practical Benefit**

This study is expected to give deeper understanding about the drama of Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance* from Feminist Perspective.

## **G. Research Method**

The writer will describe the methods that are used on the research. There are four elements to support in research method. They are:

### **1. Object of the Study**

The object of the study is *A Woman of No Importance* play which is written by Oscar Wilde and published by Pennsylvania State University 2006.

### **2. Type of the Study**

This study uses qualitative research because the writer will 1) analyze the structural elements the script of play, 2) analyze the problem of being a single parent in Oscar Wilde's play, which takes the sources data of library and other written texts

### **3. Type of the Data and the Data Sources**

Type of data source used in the research is text, consisting of the word, phrase, and sentence. The data sources can be categorized into two sources of data. They are primary data and secondary data sources:

#### **a. Primary Data Source**

The primary data source is the drama script of play itself: *A Woman of No Importance* by Oscar Wilde, particularly the dialogues,

statements and actions that reflects such the pride to be single parent on the story and the character that support the research.

b. Secondary Data Source

The writer takes the secondary data sources, including references and materials related to the study weather picking up from books or internet.

#### **4. Technique of the Data Collection**

The methods of collecting data are as follow:

- a. Reading the script of play rapidly and tries to imagine understanding the script of play.
- b. Identifying the data
- c. Taking notes and underlying the important words, phrase and sentence which are related to the study.
- d. Classifying the data into same categories.

#### **5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

The method of analyzing the data of the research is descriptive analysis. The analysis is started from the structural analysis of the work and finally the feminist perspective analysis of the play.

#### **H. Paper Organization**

This paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is introduction, covering the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, objective of the study, theoretical approach, and research method,

and paper organization. The second chapter deals with underlying theory, including the notion feminism, basic concept of feminism, structural elements of the play and theoretical application. The third chapter is social historical background of English society in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The fourth chapter is structural analysis of the drama and discussion. The fifth is dealing with feminist perspectives analysis that is reflected in *A Woman of No Importance*. And the last chapter is conclusion and suggestion.